9:Malkin E-5 (1953-1955)1962 NU31 Seri NU31

III

MAMMALS

262 water for a week until it escaped. There was
[231] no intent to do away with it and serve it up for dinner later on.

The 3 species reported as eaten in the past are kangaroo rat, sea lion and the ringtail cat or
[252] cácomistle. Of these the little rodent had been supposedly "boiled in hot water with salt" which
[261] method of preparation may indicate that it happens quite recently yet. It is quite possible that in times of famine this animal is still used. The sea
[432] lion has been reported as "eaten once a long time ago. All of it. But not now. Its hide was once sold
[114] also but now it isn't used at all." This conflicts with McGee's statement (McGee, 189:202) that there was a taboo on eating sea lions among the Seris and there is no way to reconcile the information.

[114] McGee's report may be as truthful as are the uncertain and hazy comments of the present day Indians.

224 On the other hand, the cougar belongs to a very dubious category, unless we can rely on Miguel Barnett's memory. All 4 of the younger informants emphatically deny that the cougar has ever been hunted for meat. But Miguel Barnett claimed that this has been done in the past, although he could not tell how long ago. Kroeber says nothing about this animal and this makes it difficult to date the events. At the time of Kroeber's visit, Miguel was at least 25 years old and the cougar could have been hunted either
[262] then or earlier. But today the Seris do not eat the flesh of the big cat and their abhorrence of it has been confirmed by the Mexicans to whom I talked about the subject, and who relish cougars' meat. This apparent distaste for the *el tigre's* flesh may
[178] well be a recent development quite unconnected with the lack of weapons. McGee (1894: *loc. cit.*) casually mentions that the Seris hunt both cougars and the jaguars but cites no evidence for it. Yet
[411] in his time Seris' almost only weapons were the
[177] bow and arrow and a lance which today has been replaced by firearms. I am unable to explain this contradictory behaviour.

262 Finally, there is the Ringtail cat or cácomistle. Although this beast has been reported as part of the diet, the information isn't too reliable. I had
[124] no way of checking whether this was the animal the Indians had in mind. Their description of it seemed to answer some other unspecified animal and their answers were confused. The fact is that the Ringtail cat does occur in the Seri territory and they are surely familiar with it.

Of the remaining 11 species none were ever mentioned by any of the informants as having been ever eaten. Their denial of eating the coyotes were most vehement. Coyote figures out probably

[P.98]